



U.S. Agency for International Development
Bamako, Mali

Country Strategic Plan

FY 2003 – 2012



REDUCING POVERTY AND
ACCELERATING ECONOMIC GROWTH
THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

JULY 2002

Communications for Development Special Objective (SO10)

1. Development Challenge and USAID's Advantage

Information and communication technologies are a powerful force in shaping the twenty-first century. Their revolutionary impact affects the way people live, learn and work, and the way government interacts with civil society. Information and communications technology is fast becoming a vital engine of growth for the world economy. It is also enabling many enterprising individuals, firms and communities, in all parts of the globe, to address economic and social challenges with greater efficiency and imagination.

USAID's Agency Strategy 2000 confirms this importance, stating "Information technology (IT) is more than an enhanced means for achieving development objectives. Information technology transforms processes and institutions, often creating opportunities and linkages that were previously not possible or even imaginable a decade ago—in basic education and life-long learning; in enterprises of all sizes; in participation in government; in disease prevention and control; in disaster assistance; and in development cooperation. Enabling more widespread participation and empowerment in the global information society is an important development result in its own right."

Mali requires continued assistance in invigorating the four major prerequisites of an information society, all of which are U.S. strengths: fostering effective policy and regulatory readiness; improving connectivity, increasing access to information technologies and lowering cost; building human capacity; and encouraging participation in global business activities. Although access to modern information and communication technologies has grown in recent years, few Malians have access to these technologies or know how to use them. To bridge this gap, linkages need to be developed that give all citizens access to the information they need to make informed decisions. Today, these linkages don't exist.

Under the current strategy and **Information and Communication Special Objective**, inroads were made for the introduction and use of new information technologies, and for the integration of existing technologies. The downloading of web sites via the new "WorldSpace" digital satellite technology was demonstrated for the first time ever in Mali. WorldSpace audio programming was demonstrated and introduced to the federation of private radio stations and the Peace Corps. USAID played a significant role in the development of strategies for telecenters for Mali's 703 communes, which will provide citizens with a broad range of information and communication technologies. Information and communication technologies are vital to a young democracy, ensuring that citizens are well informed and have a voice in the governance of their affairs.

Notwithstanding these impressive accomplishments, much remains to be done in this sector. Mali's illiteracy rate still remains among the highest in the world, which means that radio is still the most appropriate method of getting information to people. Since rural radio is low-cost, community-based and broadcasts in local languages, it can provide a wide range of information on a host of development topics. The emergence of new communication technologies (e.g. wireless Internet services) has resulted in a chaotic regulatory environment that needs to be addressed. Internet is more or less readily available in the capital city, but availability is still very limited in other areas of Mali. More training is needed in all areas of the IT sector to keep up with the vast growth and proliferation of technologies. Technical assistance is required on the convergence of the technologies, bridging high-tech opportunities to low-tech systems.

Applications and how to use the new and existing information and communications technologies is the next logical step for Mali at this time. Applications need to be developed to take full advantage of all the policies and infrastructure that are being put in place, and the training that has been provided. Civil society needs applications to use the new technologies that communal

telecenters will offer. Small businesses need to market their goods and services using e-commerce techniques, and to obtain market information. University teachers need new tools to make full use of the Internet and to introduce new information technologies in their curricula. Linkages need to be developed with community radio stations for disseminating information from the Internet to the masses. Government agencies need to modernize their communication, accounting, management and administrative systems to make full use of these new technologies. This is just a partial list of the types of applications that need to be developed, and Mali is ready to receive these applications to take full advantage of its successful inroads in the sector.

2. Purpose and Definition

The new **Communications for Development Special Objective** can be defined as follows: **“Accelerates development by making information accessible through innovative communication techniques and appropriate tools”**. The Communications for Development Special Objective will create opportunities for Mali to participate in the Information Society as it applies to development.

The Communications for Development Special Objective, which is designed to cover a five-year period, provides a mechanism through which USAID/Mali can continue to provide direct technical support to the other SOs while simultaneously pursuing newer, more cost-effective ways of disseminating information. The SpO will respond to requests from the GRM and local associations and development partners for technical assistance in creating and developing information and communication activities, ranging from high-tech Internet-based systems, to more grass-roots, radio-based programs. It will provide opportunities for partnerships in the Information/Communications Technology (ICT) sector. The SpO may also be a technical resource for the Mission’s growing twinning and regional responsibilities, in which a growing demand for information technology-related services is emerging. The SpO will also provide a programmatic linkage between USAID/Mali and the various USG information and communications technology initiatives that are in place, such as the Leland Initiative, Internet for Economic Development (IED), and the Education for Democracy and Development Initiative (EDDI).

The new five-year Communications for Development Special Objective is a logical outgrowth of the current Information and Communications SpO, taking advantage of the inroads accomplished in the past and forging ahead by introducing new, affordable information access technologies that have just recently emerged. The new SpO will capitalize on the local, regional and global paradigm shifts that are occurring in the policy, regulatory, tariff and technical arenas. It will continue to provide direct support for all of the other SOs by offering the tools and context for producing, organizing and disseminating information on health, education, democratic governance and decentralization, economic growth and trade, and the development of the North. As such, it will serve as an important development pillar for the USAID/Mali program. Moreover, as a stand-alone special objective, it will continue to break new ground in the use of newly developed, digitally-based information and communication technologies, while providing policy, regulatory and technical guidance on their use. It will innovate by designing activities to promote national and regional trade, building linkages between the Internet and Mali’s growing community radio network, fostering partnerships in the information and communications sector, and developing applications that take full advantage of new and existing policy and regulatory decisions, infrastructure investments, and training.

One might argue that information technology should be a crosscutting theme in the USAID/Mali portfolio. There are several compelling reasons why we have chosen to create a Special Objective, instead of relegating information and communications to a “theme”. The Communications for Development SpO will have separate and discreet funding, staff and results accountability; a SpO provides the cross-cutting support of other SOs (per ADS 201.3.4.5), while at the same time, introducing new communication techniques and technologies that would be beyond the scope of the other SOs; a SpO provides a centralized, coordinated mechanism for

interacting with the various ICT initiatives (Leland, EDDI, IED, etc.) and the Global Alliances initiative; a stand-alone SpO solidifies the US Government's pledge (from the G8 summit) to support the desire and commitment of developing countries to bridge the digital divide; a SpO has a very high potential for synergy with other SOs and with the activities of other donors, and buttresses USAID/Mali's strong leadership role in this sector; and a SpO provides the Mission with a coordinated, single source of technical assistance for GRM and local development partners on ICT issues. Finally, a SpO could provide assistance in support of the Mission's twinning and regional responsibilities.

The Communications for Development Special Objective will directly address the two main focus areas of the new USAID/Mali Country Strategic Plan: it will help reduce poverty and accelerate economic growth by providing information that has intrinsic value. Entrepreneurs and farmers can be more productive and earn more if they have more information on markets and more trade opportunities; people can be better informed on health and education matters because of informative radio programs. Three performance measures are used to show progress. By 2007, the number of new information and communication technologies adopted in Mali should increase in five years by five, the number of partnerships with the private sector initiated to enhance communications should be increased in five years by six, and the number of respondents in surveys who report an understanding of program generated messages and who demonstrate a willingness to change behavior because of such messages increases by 5% per year (over the baseline, which still needs to be determined).

3. Intermediate Results

The five-year Communications for Development Special Objective will include three Intermediate Results: IR 1 addresses the quality and quantity of development radio programming, using both existing and new technologies. IR 2 focuses on partnerships between "ICT poor" organizations and those wishing to provide commodities and services to enhance Mali's ICT sector. IR 3 deals with policy and regulatory issues.

Under the Communications for Development Special Objective, all proposed activities are demand-driven and are designed to stimulate growth in the ICT sector. Many interventions will directly support the other SOs in achieving their results, by developing targeted information messages on development topics, and by promoting positive behavior change through radio programming. Other activities will introduce new, affordable and sustainable information technologies that provide broad-base information access, preferably through partnerships and alliances. Policy interventions will ensure a favorable political environment for the introduction and use of new technologies.

Following are proposed interventions to be included under the three Intermediate Results:

a. IR 1: Quality and Quantity of Development Information Enhanced

Under this Intermediate Result, activities will be designed to enhance the quality and quantity of development information on the radio and the Internet by using appropriate communication techniques and technology. This IR is in direct support to all of the other SOs in the Mission's portfolio, and will help them address their information dissemination concerns and needs. The focus of IR 1 will be both the technical tools required for information dissemination (radio, multimedia, Internet, WorldSpace, etc.), as well as the communication techniques used to make the information understandable, relevant, and palatable.

Illustrative activities:

Develop radio programs and radio campaigns on topics directly related to USAID/Mali's Strategic Objectives: Building on the success of the Information and Communications Special Objective, USAID will design and implement radio broadcast campaigns on topics related to health, education, economic growth and democratic governance themes, using existing technology (FM

broadcast stations) as well as new technologies (WorldSpace digital receivers and multimedia). In addition to technologies, activities will also involve communication techniques, such as soap operas, comedy, music, theater, etc. to effectively communicate development messages. Activities will also be designed to enhance the local capacity to design and produce effective radio programs.

Establish linkages between radio stations and the Internet: Using newly-emerging digital technologies (such as WorldSpace, VITASat and others), USAID will provide information, training, and possibly low-cost Internet access for radio stations, thus greatly enhancing their capacity to produce high-quality and timely radio programs using the latest information on a wide range of development topics, and providing a mechanism for rapidly distributing radio programs for broadcasting.

Introduce new information exchange and dissemination technologies and promotion of existing technologies: Newly developed and affordable technologies for connecting communities to information networks are becoming available for bridging the digital divide between less developed countries and more developed nations. USAID will introduce and promote these technologies, helping communities to identify appropriate systems based on their needs, including relevant technical assistance and training. Activities implemented under the Communications for Development SpO will also assist communities in setting up and managing their community-owned radio stations and will provide training in the production of radio programs. All new technologies introduced under this SpO will be selected on the basis of the following criteria: they must be affordable, provide broad access to as many people as possible (especially women and, where appropriate, children, who traditionally have more difficulty accessing information than men), and must be sustainable.

Enhance women's access to and exchange of information via radio and Internet: To ensure that women have access to development information and that they are able to disseminate information they have created, special activities will be developed to provide training and sensitization for women's groups. Radio clubs will be created on topics directly related to women's issues, and Internet and web development training will be provided for women's organizations. USAID will assist appropriate local women's organizations in the creation of web sites devoted to women's issues. This activity will take advantage of partnership and alliance opportunities for women's groups, such as the Freeplay Foundation's program to provide radios for women.

Extend the coverage of Internet resources in areas outside of Bamako: Currently, Internet services are available mainly in Bamako, the capital city. The Communications for Development Special Objective will develop activities to enhance access in other major cities and towns, by creating pilot community telecenters or supporting programs of other donors and organizations working to create telecenters.

Key Indicators:

- Number of campaigns undertaken, and surveys on the impact of the broadcasts.
- Number of communities capable of managing their own small-scale information and communication systems, including radio stations, and basic store/forward email systems
- Establishment of a radio Internet network, linking radio stations to each other and providing Internet services for use in developing programming material.
- Number of women trained, the number of web sites created, and the number of women's radio clubs facilitated. Indicators will be developed to track the impact of these activities on women.
- Data on the availability of Internet services in the eight regions of Mali, as well as the number of community telecenters created or assisted.

b. IR 2: Partnerships in the information and communications technology sector established.

This IR focuses on activities designed to facilitate partnerships between information and communications technology (ICT) firms and local organizations. It will explore technologies and techniques for enhancing electronic trade and e-commerce options, and make available technical assistance and training for ICT activities.

Illustrative activities:

Facilitate partnerships in the ICT sector: USAID can play an important role in encouraging partnerships and alliances between Malian and U.S. information technology firms, and in leveraging funding from U.S.-led initiatives. This could be done through assistance with trade missions and fairs, technical assistance for program design, and loan-guarantee mechanisms.

Provide technical assistance on information and communication systems: This will enable USAID/Mali to respond to requests for assistance from GRM and local development partners for setting up Internet networks, using radio as part of their programs, or introducing new information and communication technologies. USAID's leadership in this sector will be leveraged to entice development partners and other donors to join our efforts in promoting ICT activities in Mali.

Expand national and regional trade: Electronic trade and e-commerce in Mali are constrained by the almost total lack of mechanisms for paying for goods and services. USAID will demonstrate and promote new technologies for logistical and financial management of e-commerce and trade over the Internet, especially in such niche markets as handicrafts and tourism. As appropriate and required, the SpO will also provide technical assistance and training in new technologies.

Key Indicators:

- Number and size of partnerships forged between U.S. and Malian institutions.
- Number and quality of guidance and technical assistance sessions provided
- Number of information systems set up and the number of alliances established.
- Creation and establishment of systems and mechanisms for the payment and trade of goods and services over the Internet.

c. IR 3: Regulatory and policy constraints to information access reduced.

The focus of this IR will be activities designed to enhance the regulatory and policy environments in the ICT sector. It will provide technical assistance and guidance to Malian regulatory and policy-making bodies for streamlining the radio frequency assignment process, regulating the technical management of Internet services, and other regulatory-related activities.

Illustrative activities:

Support liberal policy and regulatory frameworks for emerging information and communication systems and programs: The U.S. has one of the World's most dynamic telecommunication sectors, due largely to its liberalized regulatory and policy environment and an innovative private sector orientation. Thus, USAID is well poised to assist Mali in the liberalization and the rational regulation of its telecommunications sector, through technical assistance and training for the newly created telecommunications regulator body (the Comité de Régulation des Télécommunications), as well as the proposed regional regulatory organization (WATRA, the West Africa Telecommunications Regulatory Agency). This policy and regulatory support activity also provides synergistic opportunities under the West Africa Regional Program, and the Mission's twinning responsibilities.

Key Indicator:

- Mali's adherence to regulatory policies developed by and for Africans.

4. Contextual Assumptions

Prior to proposing specific activities for the next country strategic plan, USAID envisioned Mali's information & communications sector from the present to the year 2007, looking at existing trends, GRM commitments and priorities, and the evolution of the information and communications technology sector, and came up with a scenario describing what Mali would be like in the next few years, in terms of access to information and communication systems and policies. Following is a description of that scenario, which describes the contextual assumptions under which this Special Objective was designed:

- Mali maintains its policy of freedom of speech.
- Mass media continue to enjoy journalistic freedoms.
- Mali has self-regulatory bodies in place in the ICT sector.
- The GRM continues to provide strong support for the ICT sector.
- The U.S. private ICT sector continues to be open to partnerships with Malian ICT organizations and institutions.
- The Internet continues to provide relevant and useful information on a wide range of topics directly related to development activities and programs.
- The GRM continues to pursue its goal to establish telecenters in all of Mali's communes.
- Recent changes in Malian fiscal policies, notably the reduction of customs duties on computer and radio broadcasting equipment, become operational and are consistently applied.
- The GRM pursues its policy to privatize and liberalize the telecommunications sector, allowing private-sector entities to operate in a regulatory environment that encourages competition, and offering fiscal policies that encourage private investment.
- Strong, autonomous local and community organizations and support groups are promoting information technologies, and providing community-based information access points in areas where private-sector firms have not yet been established.
- Decentralization process stays on track, resulting in a civil society operating in an environment of public accountability.
- Private information technology sector thrives, with support from US equipment manufacturers and service providers.
- Impact of information and communication programs on Mali's overall economic growth are identified and their importance is recognized.
- Mali's information and communication programs take on a regional importance, transcending borders, facilitating the flow of information throughout the region, and reinforcing regional integration.
- Computer networks are proliferating throughout Mali's private and public sectors.

5. Linkages**a. Linkages within SpO**

The three Intermediate Results within the Communications for Development Special Objective form a well-integrated and inter-dependent package. Successful radio messages cannot be broadcast, and new technologies cannot be introduced, without a policy environment that is conducive to information access and the introduction of information technologies. Partnerships between private-sector firms and local associations and organizations will result in greater and improved services, and potentially more equipment, for the local ICT sector, which will result in making information more readily available.

b. Linkages within Mission Strategy

The activities proposed in the Communications for Development SpO will directly benefit all of USAID/Mali's SOs. The introduction of new technologies and support for existing programs will provide information on a wide range of development topics. Following are a few concrete examples of how the SpO will benefit and strengthen the entire portfolio.

High Impact Health Services (SO6): targeted radio broadcasts will increase demand for, and facilitate access to, quality family planning, child survival and HIV/AIDS products and services, and promote social marketing of contraceptives; the Internet will facilitate decentralized training in norms & procedures for health workers through distance-learning programs.

Improved Quality of Basic Education (SO7): school-level teacher support improved through radio education programs for teachers in school clusters; radio education programs for children to enhance curriculum for grades 1-6; radio education programs for the community to increase parent participation in schools; literacy radio programming for adults and children not in school; women have access to radios.

Shared Governance through Decentralization (SO8): promotion of participatory mechanisms for citizens and transparent management of local resources by elected leaders, and facilitation of civic education campaigns (Governance SO).

Accelerated Economic Growth (SO9): improvements of the quality of agricultural products for by providing extension messages via radio, enhancing trade through market information systems, disseminating information on environmentally-sound agricultural practices, and enhancing awareness of microfinance opportunities and responsibilities; expansion of Malian exports by promoting Malian products on the Internet.

In addition to linkages within the Mission strategy, the Communications for Development Special Objective also will contribute to four of the Africa Bureau's focus areas: radio programs on agricultural production techniques and extension messages will help farmers grow more food to improve nutrition and reduce poverty, and cut hunger; radio will be used to enhance education activities; the Internet and new information technologies will encourage national, regional and international trade; and radio coverage of decentralization, elections and civil society issues will enhance transparency, which will help combat corruption.

c. Conformance with Donor and GRM Programs

Mali has enjoyed strong leadership in the push for new information and communication technologies. In July 2000, President Konaré met with the UN Economic Council and proposed that "Part of the African debt should be used to pay for connection to the information technology highway, the development of telecommunications infrastructure and Internet". Moreover, President Konaré led the push in 1996 for the creation of the first African Internet Network, that today operates in seven countries. Mali has recently completed an exercise to develop a strategy for providing information access (via community telecenters) to its 703 communes. Mali enjoys a favorable policy environment, which includes private and public sector partnerships as well as associations and federations, and benefits from the lowest Internet access costs to private-sector providers of the West Africa region. A study conducted by USAID in 1996 demonstrated that Mali's legal and regulatory frameworks are favorable to the development of the information and communication sector. The national telecommunication parastatal is in the process of being privatized. The telecommunications sector is being liberalized and deregulated, and a second private telecom operator was recently awarded a license. Mali has created a new, independent telecommunications regulatory organization and is participating in the creation of a regional telecommunications regulatory agency. Mali has a dynamic chapter of the Internet Society, which is pursuing a mandate to extend Internet access throughout the country. The local Internet service providers have created an association to share resources and provide advocacy for Internet policies. More work is needed in the policy

arena, specifically in the areas of frequency allocations for new wireless technologies and licensing policies in a privatized telecommunications sector, but Mali has made significant progress.

In 1999, the GRM established a “Mission” on new information and communication technologies, located directly within the Prime Minister’s office. This demonstrates the GRM commitment to placing the highest priority to the IT sector in Mali.

USAID has provided leadership vis-à-vis the donor community in the ICT sector, and continues to be the leading organization in this field. The donor community and the GRM are unanimous in their appeal that USAID continue to play this leadership role in the sector, and set an example for other development organizations. USAID created and works closely with a committee of donors, international organizations and local institutions that support community radio for development activities. The committee now has 21 member organizations, and is being replicated in other countries in the region. This grouping of partners, especially in collaboration with the association of private radio stations, results in accomplishments that would be beyond the reach of any single organization.

6. Instruments

The Information & Communications Special Objective successfully used the Simplified Format Grants to Non-US Organizations (ADS 303.5.15) mechanism to implement many of its activities. This grant format has recently been modified to make it more flexible, and it will continue to be used under the new SpO.

For those local organizations that have been certified by USAID, the Communications for Development Special Objective will use grants and cooperative agreements to support local ICT programs. The SpO will help local organizations gain certification by providing training and technical assistance in financial management and other topics.

The availability of services under the new “dot.COM” initiatives will also be useful for providing partnership mechanisms. These, as well as Task Orders, will also be used to address technical assistance requirements.

Communications for Development Special Objective Results Framework

Accelerate Development By Making Information Accessible Through Innovative Communication Techniques and Appropriate Tools

- Number of new information technologies adopted (Target: 1 new technology/year)
- Number of "projects" initiated through partnerships (Target: 2/year)
- Quantity of information disseminated in support of other SOs (Target: 2 campaigns/year)

Development Context:

- GRM continued support for freedom of speech
- Continued GRM support in the ICT sector
- Private-sector open to partnerships
- Internet continues to provide useful development information

IR 1: Quality and Quantity of Development Information Enhanced

- Radio stations are exchanging information using the Internet and other new technologies to produce radio programs
- Percentage of survey respondents reporting understanding of radio messages

1.1. Messages from other sectors/SOs incorporated into radio programming messages, using appropriate communication techniques

- Number of sector-specific radio campaigns (Target: 2/yr)
- Surveys of the impact of radio programming
- Surveys of the use of skits, soap operas, theater, comedy and other techniques to communicate development messages

1.2. Access of pilot radio stations to Internet and other multimedia facilitated

- Number of radio stations connected to the Internet
- Number of radio stations receiving multimedia information

1.3. Enhanced local information is available on the Internet

- Number of web sites containing local information created (Target: 5 new sites/year)

1.4. Enhanced Internet usage in all regions of Mali

- Indicator TRD

IR 2: Partnerships in the Information and Communications Sector Established

- Number of partnerships facilitated (Target: 2/year)
- Value of commodity exchanges
- Survey of programming exchanges

2.1. Linkages facilitated between "ICT poor" local organizations, and ICT providers

- Number of meetings, round tables, conferences and other opportunities provided (Target: 3/year)

2.2. Means for overcoming obstacles to electronic micro-enterprise and trade introduced

- Number of technical assistance sessions provided

IR 3: Regulatory & Policy Constraints To Info Access Reduced

- Number of policy and regulatory changes resulting in improved and more affordable services

3.1. Market-responsive telecommunication policies and regulations supported

- Issuance of a policy on the use of radio frequencies
- Issuance of policies on the technical aspects of the Internet
- Number of technical assistance sessions provided

Risks:

- High cost limits availability of technology
- GRM no longer authorizes private radio stations
- Cybercafés and/or Internet Service Providers go out of business
- IT private-sector firms unwilling to form partnerships